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Front Edit Other
Page Page Page

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Warned Again

Central Intelligence Agency Director John McCone is the latest qualified expert to add his voice to a growing chorus of warnings to the effect that the Soviet Union, working hard and fast, could close the weapons gap between it and the United States with perhaps tragic results for the free world.

Mr. McCone recently informed House and Senate leaders in an executive meeting that the Soviets are making a tremendous effort to improve and update their military establishment. Mr. McCone's viewpoint is, of course, based upon the vast amount of intelligence from world-wide sources available to him; he knows, in other words, what he is talking about.

The CIA chief said that the Reds are putting primary stress on intercontinental ballistic missiles, the anti-missile missile and missile-firing submarines. The recent Soviet test shot, in violation of the nuclear test ban treaty, is believed to be part of the Red effort in these areas of weaponry.

Mr. McCone believes the Soviets are trying for some big breakthrough in the missile area—perhaps an effective anti-missile missile. Before being deposed, Khrushchev said Russia had such a weapon. If Moscow succeeds somewhere along the line, our whole system of deterrent weapons would be all but outmoded overnight. That, no doubt, would be the signal for greatly increased Communist pressure all over the globe.

The McCone statement that Moscow is pushing hard toward new and better weapons comes at a time when the U.S. defense establishment, under Robert McNamara, is doing little or nothing to develop new weapons systems. It appears that Mr. McNamara either believes that

the technological revolution in weapons development is over or that we are so far ahead in this field that nobody can ever hope to catch up—even if we stand still for years at the time.

The idea that advancement in weapons development has come to the end of the road just doesn't stand up. But perhaps our presumed lead over the Soviets in nuclear weaponry has inclined our defense leaders to believe that we can safely cut back on defense efforts and plow the resultant economic benefits into other areas.

But to lay back on weapons development is to underestimate the Russians, who long ago proved their ability in matters of military technology. We remember when American scientists, right after the war when we were the only atomic power, said that it would take the Soviets 15 years to come up with an atom bomb. Well, the Russian Reds did it in four years and had the hydrogen bomb only shortly after we did. And it did not take the Soviets long to come up with the means to deliver these weapons.

We need to remember that a dictatorship such as Communist Russia can divert vast resources and energies to a single purpose; something that democracies who put the people's needs first cannot do. The Communists can forget about the rank-and-file and a lot of other things, long enough to get what they want militarily. And in any real crisis, our higher standard of living won't stop Soviet missiles.

It cannot be said too many times that peace and freedom rest upon our ability to make war. And the best way to avoid war lies not in dwelling upon the horrors of it, but in keeping our defenses much stronger than those of the enemy.